



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

# Junior Chef Competition

## “Savor the Flavor of Mississippi”

### FACT SHEET

#### Purpose

The Mississippi Junior Chef Competition (MSJCC) is designed to inspire the next generation of culinary professionals by:

- Encouraging student participation in School Nutrition Programs
- Promoting awareness of locally grown Mississippi agriculture
- Supporting healthy lifestyle choices
- Providing a platform for students to showcase their culinary talent and teamwork

Students will develop, prepare, and present a nutritious, school-appropriate recipe that aligns with USDA meal patterns and includes locally sourced ingredients.

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#### Competition Structure

The MSJCC follows a 3-tiered progression:

##### 1. Mississippi Regional Competitions - closed

- Typically held at 3 locations across the state
- One winner from each regional competition advances to the MS State Competition

##### 2. Mississippi State Competition

March 3, 2026

Location: University of Southern Mississippi

- One winning team will be selected to represent Mississippi at the SERO Regionals

##### 3. Southeast Regional (SERO) Junior Chef Competition

April 23–24, 2026

Jefferson State Community College – Shelby-Hoover Campus, Alabama

- Teams compete against other southeastern states at the SERO Regional Junior Chef Competition for scholarships to Sullivan University located in Louisville, Kentucky:
    - 1st Place: \$10,000 per student
    - 2nd Place: \$7,000–\$8,000 per student
    - 3rd Place: \$5,000 per student
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## Application Information

### Eligibility

- **High school students** in **grades 9–12**
- Teams of **2 to 4 students**
- Each team must be supervised by a **Culinary Arts Instructor** who:
  - Is a **school district employee**
  - Is **present for the entire competition**
  - **May not assist** during cooking

### Important Deadlines

- Team Application & Consent Waivers Due:  
**November 15, 2025 by 2:00 p.m.**
- Recipe & Nutrient Analysis Due:  
**December 1, 2025 by 2:00 p.m.**

### Instructor Responsibilities

- Submit complete team application and waivers
- Coordinate nutrient analysis via:
  - **Local Food Service Director**, or
  - **MDE Office of Child Nutrition (OCN) Registered Dietitian**
- Ensure student adherence to competition rules and safety guidelines

### Please upload your documentation but if you have any questions:

#### Cynthia Reid Henderson

Training & Program Outreach Director / Junior Chef Coordinator Mississippi  
Department of Education – Office of Child Nutrition (601) 576-5000

[chenderson@mdek12.org](mailto:chenderson@mdek12.org)

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### Recipe & Meal Requirements

- **Servings:** Must yield **6 total servings**
  - 1 plated for display
  - 5 for judging
- Must include at least **3 NSLP components**:
  - Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)
  - Grain
  - Fruit and/or Vegetable
- Must meet high school nutritional targets:
  - **Calories:** 750–850 kcal
  - **Saturated Fat:** <10%
  - **Added Sugars:** <10%
  - **Sodium:** ≤ 1280 mg

- Must include:
    - At least **2 Mississippi Goods** (locally grown or sourced items)
    - At least **1 USDA Food Item**
      - If not available, team must explain the intended USDA item
  - Recipe must be:
    - Realistic and **replicable in school nutrition programs**
    - Prepared using **standard school kitchen equipment**
  - Teams are responsible for bringing **all ingredients**
  - Recipes will be reviewed and approved by the **MDE OCN Lead Registered Dietitian**
    - **No changes allowed** after approval
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## Student Participation Guidelines:

- Must wear **clean, professional attire**
  - Must follow **food safety and sanitation practices**, including:
    - Proper handwashing
    - Safe food handling
    - Thermometer use
  - **Not permitted:**
    - Nail polish
    - Excessive jewelry (hoop earrings, nose rings, bracelets, etc.)
  - Must **leave the venue** after scheduled cooking time
  - Must submit **signed Photo & Liability Release Forms**
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## Host Site Requirements

The **Mississippi Department of Education – Office of Child Nutrition (MDE/OCN)** is currently **seeking school districts interested in hosting the Mississippi Regional Competitions** in January 2027. If your district has the capacity and interest, we encourage you to reach out!

To host, your site must:

- Accommodate **at least 3 teams cooking simultaneously**
- Provide access to:
  - **A stove, refrigerator, and handwashing sink**
  - Cooking equipment (pots, pans, scales, hand mixers, etc.)
  - Prep tools (measuring cups, mixing bowls, knives, cutting boards, tongs, spatulas)
  - Serving equipment (plates, utensils)
- Assign a **Host Site Teacher** who will:
  - Act as the on-site liaison
  - **Secure approval from the school’s principal and/or school board** for use of the space by MDE for the “Savor the Flavor” Mississippi Junior Chef Competition

## Required Forms

The following forms are **attached to the application packet** and **must be completed and submitted** with the application by the **November 15, 2025** deadline:

### Photo Release Form

Grants MDE permission to photograph and record participants during the competition. Media may be used for:

- Educational, promotional, or informational purposes
- Websites, social media, and printed materials
- In perpetuity, with or without the student's name

Participants/guardians must indicate whether they **consent or do not consent** to media use.

### Liability Release Form

- Participation involves standard risks related to cooking, equipment use, and physical activity
- Students must follow all safety and sanitation rules
- MDE is not liable for injuries, damages, or losses during the event

**Both forms must be signed and returned** with the team application by Monday, **February 20, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.** Applications **without completed forms will not be accepted.**

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